

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 09168 250821Z

17

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SUBJ: CORFU MUNICIPALITY REAPPROVES IONICS DESALINATION PROJECT

REF A. ATHENS 8035; B. STATE 242804

1. EMBASSY WAS INFORMED NOVEMBER 24 BY TECHNOM OFFICIAL THAT CORFU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL VOTED NOVEMBER 21 TO REAPPROVE IONICS CONTRACT AND RESUME CONSTRUCTION ON WATER DESALINATION PROJECT.

2. DECISION FOLLOWS SEVERAL WEEKS' EFFORT BY IONICS OFFICIALS, GOG, AND EMBASSY TO GET STALLED PROJECT BACK ON TRACK. ECON COUNSELOR AND COMMERCIAL OFFICER MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH IONICS VP KATZ AND JOHN ARNOLD. COMMERCIAL OFFICER ALSO ACCOMPANIED IONICS OFFICIALS ON CALL ON SECRETARY GENERAL OF COORDINATION GEORGE THEOPHANOUS. LATTER SUBSEQUENTLY INTERCEDED WITH MINISTER TO PM RALLIS, INTERIOR MINISTRY, AND CORFU OFFICIALS INCLUDING NOMARCH AND MAYOR. EMBASSY ALSO BRIEFED NATIONAL TOURIST ORGANIZATION DIRECTOR DASKALAKIS ON IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS OF PROJECT FOR CORFU TOURISM.

3. GREEK OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS EASILY RECOGNIZED POTENTIAL HARM TO TOURISM AND INVESTMENT CLIMATE OF CANCELLATION OF IONICS CONTRACT AND COOPERATED FULLY IN ATTEMPTING TO OVERCOME POLITICAL OBJECTIONS OF LEFTIST MINORITY ON CORFU COUNCIL. WHILE FINAL VOTE WAS CLOSE (REPORTEDLY 12 - 10), WE BELIEVE ISSUE NOW CLOSED AND IONICS DESALINATION PROJECT WILL GO FORWARD.

KUBISCH

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